

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

311026Z Jan 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 000723

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,  
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN  
USAID/ANE/MEA  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQI ELECTIONS

#### Summary

-- Coverage of yesterday's elections in Iraq assumes a major section of front-page reporting in all papers published today, January 31. Majority of editorial commentary in all papers discuss the "historic" event and ponder the future of Iraq.

#### Editorial Commentary

-- "Iraq after the elections is not Iraq before the elections"

Semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (01/31) editorializes: "Iraq before January 30 is not Iraq prior to that date. The first to realize this change are the Iraqis themselves, who are now required to unite and to preserve the Arabism of their country, its unity and the coherence of their factions and their sects, and not be subject to either the will of foreigners and their designs and plans or the will of the terrorists and extremists, because neither of those parties wants what is best for Iraq and the Iraqi people. Iraq's interest is known to the Iraqis themselves first and foremost and not to anyone else."

-- "A memorable day in Iraq"

Daily columnist Mahmoud Rimawi writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (01/31): "It will be noted in favor of the Iraqis that, despite the severe frustration and all types of threats and interventions, they were determined to exercise their right to vote in a heroic defiance of all those who sought to deprive them of deciding their own fate.. The Iraqis have proved that independence and democracy are two sides of the same coin. This is because the absence of normal and sound political life over more than four decades opened the door for weakening the nation's independence and for the occurrence of invasion and siege.. The claim that the presence of an occupying foreign force is a pretext to thwart the right to vote has been exposed as just that - a pretext.. The presence of the occupation should not impede the move towards establishing constitutional structures. On the contrary, the presence of a foreign force must not be confronted by a political and constitutional vacuum, but rather by the establishment of national structures and administrations so that they would be prepared to snatch back power from the foreign force and establish a comprehensive national alternative once the foreign force leaves."

-- "The losing bet in Iraq"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (01/31): "Daily news and developments should not make us forget the basic issues. Iraq did not own weapons of mass destruction when the U.S. President asked for its disarmament and did not have any connection with Al-Qaeda organization and therefore had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks.. The war that American launched against Iraq was not legitimate. The Americans did not go into Iraq as liberators but as occupiers. The headline of the American and British conduct in Iraq is represented by the atrocities committed in the prisons of Abu Ghraib and Basra. Terrorism did not exist in Iraq before the occupation. The war was not meant to oust the regime but rather the state itself. The resistance would not have achieved all this success had it not enjoyed popular support. Some of the measures of the occupation forces constitute war crimes in the true and legal sense.. These are the basic issues in which light Iraq before, under and after the occupation must be

judged.. The continuation of the American presence in Iraq is not going to achieve the stability that existed before. In fact, this presence perpetuates and escalates the current state of insecurity.. America lost the war in Iraq and the occupation authority is not a good winning bet. America has no future in Iraq."

-- "Historic elections"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/31): "This description really does apply to the elections that took place in Iraq yesterday, except that one cannot discern which way the history of Iraq is going to move from now on.. 'The spring of Baghdad' this time is happening over a river of bloodshed. That is why one cannot determine whether this historic day is going to shake the foundations of the countries of the region, their security, stability and identity or shake the foundations of the American empire. The democratic lesson to be learned in Baghdad is that this could be the beginning of legitimate change, whatever this change may be, or it could be the beginning of convoluted resistance, ethnic or sectarian, against foreign armies that have come across the oceans and the borders."

-- "The Iraqi elections"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back-page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (01/31): "The elections that America is promoting as being an Iraqi internal issue are a development subject to the interests of the American plan for hegemony over Iraq. Yet, one must acknowledge the fact that legislative parliamentary elections or presidential elections in the Arab world have also become subject to the interests of the ruling authority in all the Arab countries in the past few decades.. It remains to be seen if the legislative elections in Iraq effect change in Iraq, but it would only constitute a change in the minor details unless genuine initiatives towards ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq arise. Other than that, any and all developments are nothing more than an attempt to beautify the image of the occupation."

-- "Blood, teas and ballot boxes"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the back-page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (01/31): "The Iraqi elections, unlike elections anywhere in the world, open the door wide for the unknown. The absence of certainty, which accompanied preparations for the elections, is the master of ceremonies now and will continue to be even after the results are officially declared. We are facing a project that has lost its political consensus. Numbers and ratios will never succeed in giving legitimacy to any institutions, laws and constitutions that will come to pass.. The winners in the Iraqi elections are not necessarily the most popular. The elections in Iraq were a compulsory event dictated by America's arrogance. Most likely they will not be the last such event. The most that we can hope for is that this would mark the end of sorrows for the Iraqi people and not the end of elections in Iraq."

-- "Iraq wins in the elections"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (01/31) editorializes: "For the elections to take place in Iraq yesterday in the manner that they did is beyond all expectations.. Come what may, the elections took place despite the security and political chaos.. The importance now lies in how to employ the outcome of the elections in preserving the Iraq's unity, land and people, in preparing for the departure of the foreigners, in establishing a free and independent state capable of rising up again. The elections are nothing but the beginning of a long, difficult and unsafe road and it is the responsibility of the Iraqis to protect and preserve Iraq as much as it is the responsibility of all the Arabs to stand by the Iraqis and see them through this stage safely and securely."

-- "Iraq's path after the elections"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (01/31): "Elections in themselves are just a political process that may not have any credibility in as far as freedom and independence are concerned. The most important thing however is the final outcome of

the elections and whether they lead to stability or chaos. All possibilities exist in this case due to the complicated situation in Iraq, the continued presence of the occupation and terrorism, and the attempt for intervention on the part of certain neighboring countries and fundamentalist organizations. The real measure of success for these elections will not appear today or tomorrow or even in months, because this measure is represented by a national Iraqi government able to deal with the Iraqi people as one independent unit, and not as Shiites, sects and races, and able to achieve an acceptable level of security and development within a short period of time.. The path before Iraq stands at a crossroads: either independence or civil war and chaos. Iraq needs a well-aware and clean leadership that achieves the objectives of the Iraqi people, and not those of the occupation, the neighboring countries, the sects or the races."

-- "Had the Sunnis not boycotted, the occupation would have won"

Daily columnist Yaser Za'atreh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (01/31): "Had it not been for the boycott of the Arab Sunnis in the [Iraqi] elections, we could have easily said that the outcome is the victory of the occupation. This is because there is no expectation whatsoever that any outcome would lead to the formation of a government that would in turn tell the occupiers to leave.. In all circumstances, the election results are not going to give the Shiites the right to rule Iraq. This is not because of the absence of the Arab Sunnis, but because they will be forming a government in a country residing under occupation. Only active participation in evicting the occupation and achieving total independence for Iraq would grant the Shiites stature in the new Iraq.. In short, the elections celebration yesterday was a farce, designed to uphold the occupation and beautify its ugly face."

HALE